

GOVT 2305: Federal Government

Fall 2025

Section: 13410

Texas A&M University-San Antonio

Instructor Information

Name: José O. Pérez, Ph.D.

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Office Number: Central Academic Building (CAB) 351A

Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays from 11:30 AM-1:30 PM, in person or via Zoom, and/or by appointment.

Class Information

Dates: Tuesdays and Thursdays from Aug 25, 2025 - Dec 12, 2025

Time: 3:30 pm - 4:45 pm

Classroom: Senator Frank L. Madla 206

Contact hours: 3 hours per week

Format of instruction: Course is discussion based and in-person face-to-face instructional method.

Syllabus is subject to change throughout the semester and the instructor reserves the right to alter the schedule, readings, due dates, and so forth.

Course Description

Origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, structure and powers of the national government including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties and civil rights.

Course Learning Objectives

- Course Learning Objective 1: Students will analyze the origins of the U.S. Constitution and understand how foundational principles such as separation of powers, checks and balances, and sovereignty shape our federal government.
- Course Learning Objective 2: Students will be able to describe the organization, roles, and powers of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, and evaluate how these institutions interact within each other.
- Course Learning Objective 3: Students will comprehend how individuals and groups engage with the politics through voting, political parties, interest groups, and civic action.

- Course Learning Objective 4: Student will gain a deeper understanding of their civic rights and duties within our society, and the importance of participation in the political process.

Grading

1. Grading Breakdown

Tasks	Percent of Final Grade
2-Page Short Essay Responses (2 in total):	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Participation	10%
Quizzes	20%
=Total	=100%

2. University Grading Scale:

This class will use the standard TAMU-SA grading scheme, summarized in the table below:

Grade	From	To
A	100%	90%
B	<90%	80%
C	<80%	70%
D	<70%	60%
F	<60%	0%

Important Dates:

- Short Essay Response #1: Due 9/21
- Midterm Exam: Due 10/10
- Short Essay Response #2: Due 11/9
- Final Exam: Due 12/12

Graded Course Components

1. 2-Page Short Essay Response (2 total): These will be written essays where students will be given a prompt and will answer the prompt using readings and material covered in class. Students should use this assignment to practice: 1) crafting a thesis statement, 2) developing paragraph topic sentences and ancillary paragraphs to build an argument, 3) synthesizing and employing sources, and 4) constructing a critical argument from introduction to conclusion that is concise and well supported. A full rubric will be provided for the assignment ahead of time. Responses must be 2-3 pages double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, with 1-inch margins all around. The assignment will be open online on Blackboard with the prompt and students will have 5 days to complete the assignment. Students are not allowed to work with each other on this assignment.
2. Midterm Exam: Students will complete an online exam of about 40 questions in length. Questions will vary between multiple choice, true/false, and short written responses (a paragraph or so will suffice to answer these). The exam will be open on Blackboard and students will have 2 days to complete it and submit it via Blackboard during whichever 90-minute time interval they so choose to complete the exam during those 2 days. The exam will be virtual via Blackboard, open-notes and open-book. However, students are not allowed to collaborate or work with each other on the exam. Students will have one attempt to complete it – once a student opens the exam on Blackboard the clock will start ticking and that will be their only opportunity to complete the exam.
3. Final Exam: Students will complete an online exam of about 40 questions in length. Questions will vary between multiple choice, true/false, and short written responses (a paragraph or so will suffice to answer these). The exam will be open on Blackboard and students will have 2 days to complete it and submit it via Blackboard during whichever 90-minute time interval they so choose to complete the exam during those 2 days. The exam will be virtual via Blackboard, open-notes and open-book. However, students are not allowed to collaborate or work with each other on the exam. Students will have one attempt to complete it – once a student opens the exam on Blackboard the clock will start ticking and that will be their only opportunity to complete the exam.
4. Participation: Participation is an important part of student learning and classroom engagement, and therefore a part of the grade. To obtain full participation points a student must participate actively and consistently throughout the semester. However, I employ a broad definition of participation: asking a question, answering a colleague's question, asking a colleague to clarify their point, engaging in small group activities, helping a colleague during/after class, paying attention attentively as others speaks, pointing out a passage from the reading you would like clarification on, participating in classroom discussions, etc. Attendance will be taken regularly throughout the semester and will count towards your participation grade – each unexcused absence will result in a half point being subtracted from your participation grade.

5. Quizzes: These will be conducted weekly or biweekly throughout the semester and will focus on the assigned readings for that week and on material from previous lectures. Quizzes will be multiple choice, consisting of 5-7 questions. Students may complete the quiz at any given time during the 24-hour period that the quizzes are open on Blackboard, however, they will have 20 minutes and 1 attempt only to complete the quiz after opening it. The 3 lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Required Texts and Other Course Materials

American Government: Power and Purpose 17th Edition, Theodore J Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A Shepsle, Stephen Ansolabehere, Hahrie Han. 2023. (Any edition will do) (Additional Readings on Blackboard). A reliable internet connection and computer will also be a necessity throughout the semester to complete and submit assignments.

Late Work Policy

All assignments are due on the specified time and date listed. All assignments submitted more than 15 minutes after they are due will be assessed a 5-percentage point late penalty. There will be an additional 5 percentage point penalty for each subsequent day that the assignment is late. No assignments will be accepted more than one week late.

Quizzes are all virtual, and cannot be made up. Extensions need to be arranged ahead of time with the instructor.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is highly, highly encouraged because it usually correlates directly to learning outcomes in college-level courses. However, I understand there are many intervening factors that can cause a student to miss class. Try to come to class as much as possible and please communicate with me so we can work together on a plan to make up material or assignments missed due to unforeseen circumstances. Attendance will be taken regularly and will count as part of your participation grade.

Email Policy

When you email me, please expect a reply in around 72 hours, and responses may be delayed further over the weekend. This is because of conflicting obligations with family, research, and hobbies. Thus, important questions regarding assignments should be asked well ahead of time because if asked very close to the due date and time – you may not hear from me until after the assignment is due. Emailing me to notify me of an emergency is, of course, a valid matter.

Phone and Computer Usage Policy

I understand we live in a highly connected society and that emergencies arise that require immediate attention. Nevertheless, please refrain from cell phone usage during class unless it is an emergency, and please put phones on silent during class. Also, please limit your laptop usage during class to note-taking and other activities immediately related to the lecture to not disrupt your learning and that of those around you. Be present, be engaged, be active.

Blackboard Policy

Please check Blackboard regularly for course updates, assignment announcements, or possible lecture cancellations. I will notify you in advance during class of upcoming assignments – but it is a good habit to check Blackboard regularly.

Tentative Schedule and Timeline of Readings

This is a tentative course schedule – please complete readings and reflect on them before class.

Week 1: Course Introduction and What is Politics?

Tuesday 8/26: Course and personal introductions, review of syllabus, instructions for completing the readings, and students set personal learning goals -No required readings

Thursday 8/28: Required Readings: American Government Chapter 1

Week 2: The Constitution and Origins of U.S. Federal Government

-Tuesday 9/2: Required Reading: Declaration of Independence and American Government Chapter 2

-Thursday 9/4: Required Reading: The Federalist Papers and American Government Chapter 2

Week 3: Federalism and Separation of Power and Checks and Balances

-Tuesday 9/9: Required Reading: The Constitution and the Bill of Rights and American Government Chapter 3

-Thursday 9/11: No class, no readings. Professor at conference.

Week 4: Constitutional Orders and Checks and Balances

-Tuesday 9/16: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 3

-Thursday 9/18: Schoolhouse Rock shown in-class, and in-class activity. Required Reading: Amendments to the Constitution.

*****Short Essay Response #1 Due 9/21 by 11:59 PM

Week 5: Congress, or The Legislative Branch

-Tuesday 9/23: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 6

-Thursday 9/25: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 6

Week 6: The Presidency, or the Executive Branch

-Tuesday 9/30: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 7

-Thursday 10/2: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 8

Week 7: Midterm Exam

-Tuesday 10/7: Review for Midterm exam in class.

*****-Thursday 10/9: Midterm Exam due 10/10 via Blackboard by 11:59 PM – no in-person class or readings

Week 8: The Supreme Court, or the Judicial Branch

-Tuesday 10/14: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 9

-Thursday 10/16: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 9

Week 9: Civil Liberties

-Tuesday 10/21: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 4

-Thursday 10/23: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 4

Week 10: Civil Rights

-Tuesday 10/28: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 5

-Thursday 10/30: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 5

Week 11: Public Opinion and Elections

-Tuesday 11/4: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 10

-Thursday 11/6: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 11

*****Short Essay Response #2 Due 11/9 by 11:59 PM

Week 12: Political Parties

-Tuesday 11/11: Veteran's Day, no class, no readings.

-Thursday 11/13: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 12

Week 13: Interest Groups and The Media

-Tuesday 11/18: Required Reading: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 13

-Thursday 11/20: Required Reading: Required Reading: American Government Chapter 14

Week 14: Thanksgiving

-Tuesday 11/25: No class, no readings, Thanksgiving.

-Thursday 11/27: No class, no readings, Thanksgiving.

Week 15: Economic Policy and What is Politics (revisited)?

-Tuesday 12/2: Required Reading:

-Thursday 12/4: No required reading, course wrap up. Please review readings from Week 1 and 2 of the course for our discussion.

*****Final Exam Due via Blackboard on 12/12 by 11:59 P.M.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Penalties for Academic Dishonesty

The faculty of the Department of Arts and Sciences expects students to conduct their academic work with integrity and honesty. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in the failure of a course and dismissal from the University.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, collusion- the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit, the abuse of resource materials, and misrepresentation of credentials or accomplishments as a member of the College. Students are expected to do their own course work. Cheating or plagiarism by an individual student will result in a grade of F on the particular paper or in the course. The University's policy on academic honesty and appeal procedures can be found in <http://www.tamusa.tamus.edu/undergraduate-catalog-2011.pdf>.

Prohibited Conduct

All forms of prohibited conduct are outlined in the TAMU-SA student handbook. In addition, guidelines and procedures for handling instances of student misconduct are contained therein, which can be viewed on line at:
<http://www.tamusa.tamus.edu/studenthandbook.html>

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us <https://www.tamusa.edu/Disability-Support-Services/index.html> or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services as soon as possible.

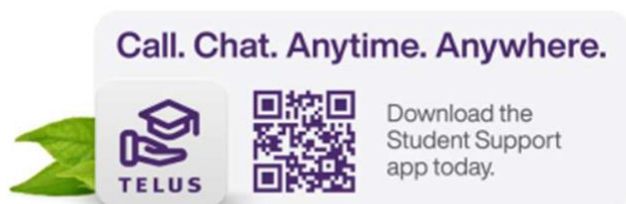
Academic Learning Center: The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the Tools section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

Counseling/Mental Health Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information on SCC services visit <http://tamusa.edu/studentcounseling>

Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331.

Additionally, the TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including support for in the moment distress, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



Emergency Preparedness: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com>

More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/about-us/emergency-management/>

Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center: The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish

for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics>.

Meeting Basic Needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE referral (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities/file-a-report.html>) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources.

Office Hours: All faculty with teaching assignments should include regularly scheduled office hours on each syllabus in addition to "by appointment." Please review your appointment letter for the number of weekly office hours you are expected to set. Regularly scheduled office hours should also be posted outside your office door (where applicable).

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances: Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided with an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and

human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related sex-based misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students: Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable modifications to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu;

210-784-2061; CAB 439K). Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources.

Young Jaguars: can support parenting students with daycare who meet this criteria: Must be enrolled in classes at TAMUSA in the current semester. Must be Pell eligible or a single parent. They serve children ages 3 to 12-years-old. Children must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. youngjaguars@tamusa.edu (210) 784-2636

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university students' rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/documents/Student-Handbook-2022-23.pdf>) or visit the resources available in the OSRR website (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/academicintegrity.html>).

No Use of Generative AI Permitted

Comparative Politics assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

Important Dates: Fall 2025 Regular 16-Week Session

August 25 First day of class

September 1

September 10

November 14

Labor Day Holiday – No classes

Census Date

Last day to drop with an automatic “W”

November 25 Last day to withdraw from the University

November 26 Study Day – No classes

November 27-29 Thanksgiving Holiday – No classes

December 4 Last day of classes

December 5 Study Day – No classes

December 6-12 Final exams

December 16 Commencement

The complete academic calendar is available online:

<https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/academiccalendar/index.html>